

MASS. Y3. ISQ: N29

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NEEDLE TRADES ACTION PROJECT

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Established in 1985, The Needle Trades Action Project addresses the needs of the sewn goods industry in Southeastern Massachusetts. In its three years, NTAP has worked with over 80 companies on a range of projects. Currently, NTAP is working on problems of marketing, child care, training, engineering and technical assistance with firms in Fall River and New Bedford.

CHILD CARE

One of NTAP's major accomplishments has been the construction of a garment industry child care center at the Fabrican Curtain Factory in Fall River. NTAP's Child Care Committee commissioned the survey of Fabrican and other garment workers in the area which outlined the need for the center. It then provided help in locating and obtaining financing from state and city agencies including a loan from the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency's child care fund. On June 24, 1988 Governor Michael S. Dukakis unveiled the Center's cornerstone. The Center is scheduled to open in the Fall of 1988.

PLANT ENGINEERING

Through a cost-sharing program in which companies pay 40 % of the cost, NTAP has provided engineering studies to small and mid-sized firms. The studies analyze and redesign plant layouts and work flow and result in increased productivity and cost savings. Plants producing both mens and ladies garments have benefitted substantially from these engineering services.

CROSS TRAINING

More than 100 workers have received multi-skill training in the last year thanks to an arrangement between NTAP and Mass Jobs Southeast. In part, multi-skilling helps address the problems of underemployment in the industry by making workers more flexible. Traditionally, garment factories have gone through cycles of hiring and laying off workers with similar skills, e.g. hiring spot pressors while laying off bench pressors. By broadening workers skills through cross training, workers can achieve more stable working hours and firms can avoid loss in production efficiency caused by the layoffs and recruitment and the high turnover rates they engender.

MARKETING AND PRODUCTION CO-OP

Through the NTAP marketing committee, contract apparel firms are developing a plan for a producer's co-op which will address the problems of a very unstable market. Modeled after the experience of cranberry producers and Ocean Spray, the proposed co-op would help sell the production capacity of local firms in way no single firm could do itself. A particular target is the growing market niche for private label production commissioned directly by retailers.

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